

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Anthony Principi
Chairman
Defense Base Realignment and Closure Commission
2521 South Clark St., Suite 600
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Chairman Principi:

As representatives of nearly 800 members of the 110th Fighter Wing from Battle Creek Air National Guard Base (BCANGB), we would like to thank you for allowing Michigan to present its case at the BRAC regional hearing in St. Louis on June 20th and we respectfully request a site visit as a follow-on to the hearing. In addition, we write to express our concern over DoD's recommendation to transfer the 110th Fighter Wing to Selfridge and close BCANGB.

On October 14, 2004, Undersecretary of Defense Mike Wynne wrote to the Service Secretaries and the Chairman of the Joint Cross-Service Groups responsible for compiling DoD's BRAC recommendations. In this letter, he outlined seven key principles to guide DoD in order to ensure, "military value is the primary consideration in making closure and realignment recommendations." We think these principles were not fully considered when the decision to close BCANGB was made. Specifically, there are four criteria ("recruit and train", "quality of life", "organize", and "deploy and employ") which appear to be overlooked by this decision.

Secretary Wynne writes, "The Department must attract, develop, and retain personnel who are highly skilled and have access to effective, diverse, and sustainable training space." BCANGB is a state of the art facility that in addition to the 110th Fighter Wing provides training space for the Navy Reserve, conducts NATO joint training exercises, is co-located with Fort Custer Army Reserve Training Center, and has the only secure 10,000' runway in the state of Michigan capable of receiving any aircraft in the military inventory including Air Force One. If BCANGB is closed, this effective, diverse and sustainable training space will be lost to the service.

The second criterion states, "The Department must provide a quality work place that supports recruitment and enhances retention." If the DoD recommendations stands, it effectively dismantles a unit that has been manned at 100% since the attacks of 9/11. To continue serving, more than 700 Air National Guard members who live in far Western Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin will have to commute to Selfridge in far Eastern Michigan. This will add a minimum of five additional hours of driving time for each drill weekend. We believe an all volunteer military must be connected to its community and be given opportunity to serve within a reasonable distance of their home. We believe the decision to close Battle Creek does not take this criterion into account.

"Organize", states, "The Department needs force structure sized and located to match the demands of the National Military Strategy effectively and efficiently...and that takes advantage of joint basing." BCANGB and its facilities are the most modern in the Air National Guard. In the past ten

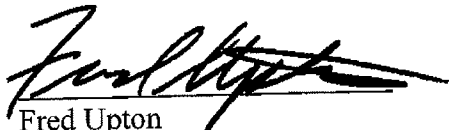
years, over \$37 million has been spent to upgrade and expand the capabilities of the installation. The base has been a staging point for numerous deployments of the Army and Air National Guard and Marine Corps and Navy Reserve. Being co-located with Fort Custer gives the members of the Air National Guard immediate access to Army firing ranges, and over 8,000 acres of federally owned training space. The Defense Logistics Agency at the Hart-Doyle-Inouye Federal Center in Battle Creek uses the base as an alternate operating site in the event of an emergency or natural disaster. Closing Battle Creek will end what has been an efficient joint operation.

"Deploy and Employ," reads, "The Department needs secure installations that are optimally located for mission accomplishment and sustain the capability to mobilize and surge." As noted before, the 10,000' runway can accommodate all military aircraft and provides a secure staging point to support mobilization and surge operations. In addition, the base has no encroachment issues as it is bordered by thousands of acres belonging to Fort Custer. Airspace in Battle Creek is not crowded because the facility is not located near metropolitan areas. The apron on the runway can easily bed-down two fighter wings. From an operational perspective, Battle Creek provides an optimal facility and location for deploying and employing troops.

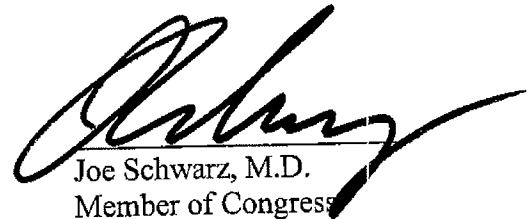
Most importantly, closing BCANGB and relocating the 110FW will effectively remove a proven combat capability from the force as it will take time to retrain and reconstitute the unit. We are concerned that this is a poor decision during a time of war. We see no evidence that DoD took this into account when the decision to close Battle Creek was made. If there are savings from closing Battle Creek, they will be offset by the lost combat capability and the cost of retraining and reconstituting the unit in a new location.

We respectfully ask for a careful examination of the military value and cost effectiveness of the recommendation to move the 110FW and close the Battle Creek facility. After the hearing on June 20, we welcome you to come to Battle Creek and see for yourself the military value of the base and the strong support the surrounding area provides to the military. Thank you for your attention and consideration of this matter. We look forward to hearing from you.


Sincerely,



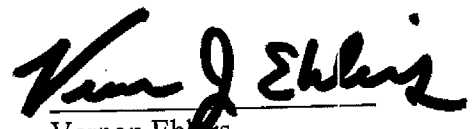
Fred Upton
Member of Congress



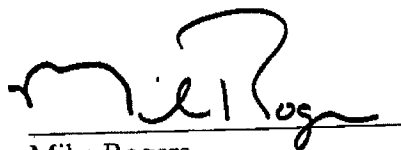
Joe Schwarz, M.D.
Member of Congress



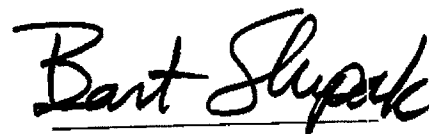
Peter Hoekstra
Member of Congress



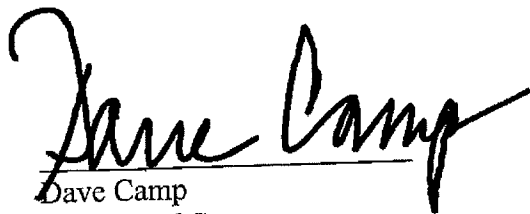
Vernon Ehlers
Member of Congress



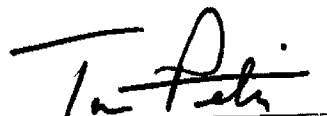
Mike Rogers
Member of Congress



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